United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1102
19 March 1992

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General holds first press conference at Headquarters after 79 days in office, emphasizing cooperation between United Nations and regional organizations and relationship between peace and development; announces creation of task force to prepare position paper on peace-keeping, peace-making and preventive diplomacy.

+ In Presidential statement, the Security Council tonight welcomes decision by Iraqi authorities to resume discussions on the sale of Iraqi oil to meet the essential humanitarian needs of its civilian population, in conformity with resolutions 706 and 712 (1991).

+ General Assembly approves appropriation of $250 million for initial expenses of United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia.

+ Anti-Apartheid Committee Chairman says South African referendum "must be the last one to be conducted by segment of population on destiny of entire nation"; General Assembly President calls results of referendum "positive and encouraging"; Committee to observe International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, tomorrow, 20 March.

+ Secretary-General meets with Permanent Representatives to the United Nations of Venezuela, Colombia, Mexico and Spain -- "Friends of the Secretary-General" -- for briefing on El Salvador.

+ United Nations is owed over $1.2 billion by Member States to regular budget and over $638 million for peace-keeping operations, according to new report on status of contributions as of 29 February 1992.

+ International Earth Day to be observed at Headquarters tomorrow, 20 March.

+ United Nations offers immediate relief aid to earthquake victims in Turkey.

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For information media—not an official record

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali disclosed today during his first press conference after 79 days in office that a task force was being created, under the presidency of Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Vladimir Petrovsky, in conformity with the decision adopted by the Security Council's summit meeting held in New York on 31 January 1992. The purpose of the task force, he said, was to prepare and submit by the end of May a position paper related to the issues of peace-keeping, peace-making and preventive diplomacy to the Security Council.

Reviewing his first two-and-a-half months as United Nations Secretary-General, Mr Boutros-Ghali emphasized the Organization's peace-keeping activities in countries and regions such as Yugoslavia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Somalia, Myanmar, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Western Sahara, among others.

He underlined the importance attached to increased cooperation between the United Nations and different regional organizations in the area of peace-keeping, peace-making and preventive diplomacy. In Yugoslavia, he said, "there is a very clear division of labour between the European Community, dealing with national reconciliation and the building of the peace process. He said the role of the United Nations related in that respect related only to peace-keeping to maintain the cease-fire. In Somalia, he explained, the Organization was cooperating with three regional organizations -- the Arab League, the Islamic Conference and the Organization of African Unity -- in the implementation of the peace process in that country. Finally, he said, in the conflict in Armenia and Azerbaijan, the United Nations was encouraging the Europeans to play a role. "We are hoping that through this cooperation, we may promote preventive diplomacy and we may even promote a kind of decentralization in the different operations of peace-keeping", the Secretary-General stressed.

Addressing the Palestinian issue, the Secretary-General emphasized that the United Nations "continued to do whatever ought to be done" to help the Palestinians in the occupied territories through its different organizations. As to the international conference on the Middle East, he reiterated that if the United Nations "will be invited to participate as a full-fledged member, we will welcome this, but we will not accept to participate in the conference as an observer". The presence of the United Nations was essential to maintain peace and to promote a peace process in the region, he said.

Speaking about the role that the Organization could play in the creation of a "new world order", Mr. Boutros-Ghali said that the United Nations could be "a framework for discussion, for reflection". The final decision, he said, would have to be taken by the Member States. "But I believe that there will be no new world order, unless there is more democratization of the international relations, meaning a better participation of the 175 Members of the United Nations in the different problems discussed in the United Nations", he said.

The Secretary-General concluded by stressing the close relationship between peace and development. "If we want to achieve real peace, a lasting

peace, it is very important to maintain the relation between peace-keeping operations and the peace-building operations -- meaning economic and social development, economic and technical assistance", he concluded.

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The Security Council has welcomed the decision of Iraqi authorities to resume discussions with the United Nations on the implementation of a scheme provided for in resolutions 706 and 712 (1991), permitting Iraq to sell $1.6 billion worth of petroleum and petroleum products to meet the essential humanitarian needs of the civilian population.

In a statement read by the President of the Council, Diego Arria (Venezuela) during a formal meeting tonight, the Council welcomed the Secretary-General's intention to organize the discussions without delay. The Council said it was prepared to authorize the sales regime as stated in its resolutions for a period of six months, "as soon as the Secretary-General indicates that Iraqi authorities are prepared to proceed". The Council also said it was prepared to consider possible further extensions of time based on Iraq's cooperation with the resolutions.

Earlier this week, a United Nations spokesman announced the appointment of Assistant Secretary-General Giandomenico Picco as head of the United Nations delegation participating in the talks on the sale of Iraqi oil. The talks are expected to resume shortly in Vienna, but no date has yet been announced.

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The General Assembly this morning approved the appropriation of $250 million for the initial expenses of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), as recommended by the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary).

By the resolution, adopted without a vote, the Assembly accepted the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) that the $250 million should be adequate until the Secretary-General submits a report on additional requirements as may be necessary for the period beyond 1992. The report will be due at the start of the next General Assembly.

Speaking after the Assembly action, the representative of Yugoslavia, Darko Silovic, pledged that his country would offset the operation's cost to the extend possible. He also called on all parties to work for a comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict through the Conference on Yugoslavia.

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The Chairman of the Special Committee Against Apartheid interpreted yesterday the result of the South African referendum for whites only as "an

unequivocal expression of support for the continuation of the current process of negotiations".

In a comment on Tuesday's referendum, Ibrahim A. Gambari said the Special Committee was most concerned about the referendum's lack of universal pluralism, since it included only about 15 per cent of the total population of South Africa. It was the firm hope of the Committee, he said, that this would be the last referendum to be conducted by a segment of the South African population on the destiny of the entire nation.

In a related development, the President of the General Assembly, Samir S. Shihabi (Saudi Arabia) said today in a statement that he was pleased to learn that the results of the referendum in South Africa were "positive and encouraging". He expressed hope that the results would augur well for the future of all the people of South Africa and would lead to the full and complete elimination of apartheid and the early establishment of a truly non-racial society in South Africa.

In other news, the Special Committee will hold a solemn meeting in observance of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination tomorrow, 20 March, at Headquarters. The meeting will be followed by a round-table discussion attended by individuals and representatives of South African liberation movements and non-governmental organizations, among others.

The annual observance marks the thirty-second anniversary of the massacre at Sharpeville, South Africa, of 69 persons demonstrating peacefully against apartheid laws, which required Africans to carry identification books at all times.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met yesterday with the Permanent Representatives of Colombia, Mexico, Spain and Venezuela to the United Nations, to discuss the situation in El Salvador.

The Secretary-General's Spokesman said today that Mr. Boutros-Ghali had briefed the four countries' representatives on the mission to El Salvador of Under-Secretary-General Marrack Goulding last week. Among the issues discussed was the forthcoming consultative meeting at the World Bank at which reconstruction efforts for El Salvador would be taken up. The countries assured the Secretary-General of their own continued support in those efforts.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali informed them that United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) would be participating, and he expressed the hope that the international community would be well represented and lend its full backing to the task of national reconciliation.

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According to a new report on the status of contributions to the United Nations regular budget as of 29 February 1992, Member States owe the Organization over $1.2 billion for this year and all previous years.

According to the report, the peace-keeping operations are currently owed some $638 million by Member States.

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Immediate relief aid to the victims of the 13 March earthquake in eastern Turkey has been coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO).

According to estimates, 800 to 1000 persons have died, a similar number are injured and 180,000 have been left homeless by the quake which devastated the city of Erzincan, causing additional damage. The priority is now to find shelter for the homeless in Erzincan and the surrounding villages.

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The International Earth Day will be observed at United Nations Headquarters tomorrow, 20 March, for the twenty-third time. Since 1969, the Peace Bell, forged out of coins collected by children from 60 countries and donated to the United Nations by Japan, has been the focal point of the annual United Nations ceremony commemorating the Day.

This year's celebration comes in advance of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June.

At Headquarters, a ceremony will be held at the Peace Bell at 3:48 a.m. (EST), the moment of the Vernal Equinox, marking the first day of spring in the Northern Hemisphere and autumn in the Southern Hemisphere. Former hostage Joseph Cicippio will participate in this ceremony together with his wife, Elhan, and his brother Thomas.

Participating in a second Peace Bell Ceremony at 3:30 p.m. will be representatives of Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Director-General of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Federico Mayor. Also present will be the United Nations Ambassadors of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

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